

COMMANDER'S SAFETY POLICY



VMFAT-501 is charged with employing the F-35B, the most complex and capable fighter aircraft in the history of Marine Aviation. We share a tremendous responsibility to properly care for these precious airplanes, but we must also preserve our most valuable warfighting assets, our Marines and Sailors. At VMFAT-501 we will take care of our airplanes and our fellow Marines as we conduct safe and effective operations in the F-35B.

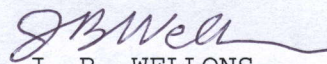
There is inherent risk associated with 5th Generation STOVL operations, but we cannot be risk averse and still accomplish the mission. We will smartly identify hazards, make sound risk decisions, and properly supervise all aspects of operations. We will vehemently resist pressure to cut corners; there is no task at VMFAT-501 that will justify unsafe operations or unmanaged risk. Mishaps often result from a failure to anticipate hazards or a tendency to become complacent in routine operations. We will work hard to fight such trends and maintain a self-critical and transparent culture in which we acknowledge and learn from mistakes without fear of retribution.

The Warlord mission is to train F-35B pilots and we will optimize every training opportunity, but we will never sacrifice safety in order to "get the X." Always comply with NATOPS/FSD, OPNAV 3710, OPNAV 4790, Training Rules, and SOP. You are maintaining and flying a national asset; do not take any action that you could not defend with a clear conscience to a mishap board. Be assertive and do not allow yourself to be surprised by this airplane.

Aside from the inherent risk of flight operations, our biggest threat is off-duty automobile and motorcycle accidents that involve alcohol, excessive speed, and fatigue. Tragically, we consistently lose more Marines on the highway than we lose in combat. We will avoid such losses at VMFAT-501 through vigilant supervision and the following control measures:

- Motorcycle riders will complete required training.
- All supervisors will ensure their subordinates have sound leave and liberty plans.
- When driving: wear your seatbelt, minimize distractions such as texting, comply with traffic laws, and ensure you are rested.
- Do not drink and drive. DUI consequences will be devastating.

At VMFAT-501 we will maintain an open climate in which procedural doctrine is never outweighed by perceived pressure to get the job done. We will do the job right the first time, take care of our fellow Marines, and we will be both successful and safe.


J. B. WELLONS